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# MY MASTER

TEMPLE AT DAKSHINESWARA ABOUT FOUR MILES NORTH OF CALCUTTA, INDIA.

# MY MASTER

BY THE

SWÂMI VIVEKÂNANDA

*WITH AN APPENDED EXTRACT*

FROM THE

THEISTIC QUARTERLY REVIEW

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*Om Namo Bhagavate Râmakrishnâya !*

(Salutation to Blessed Râmakrishna !)

# PREFACE

THE following lecture, which was delivered in New York under the auspices of the Vedânta Society, describes briefly one of the most remarkable men that India has given to the nineteenth century. He was known as PARAMHAMSA SRIMAT RAMAKRISHNA, and is regarded by thousands of his fellow-countrymen as a Divine Incarnation, although he would not claim for himself any high position. The influence of his teachings is making itself felt in all parts of India, and has even extended to Europe and America.

The frontispiece represents the temple near which he passed the last years of his life. He lived in a small house in the extensive gardens surrounding the temple, and great crowds of people came to listen to his words. Since

his death a yearly festival has been held on the anniversary of his birth, and is each year attended by increasing numbers. The title *Paramhamsa* means, literally, "Great Soul," and is given by the Hindus to such men only as have attained to the highest spiritual illumination. *Srimat* is a title of respect, and is used here in the sense of "most revered."

THE EDITOR.

# MY MASTER

"WHENEVER virtue subsides and vice prevails, I come down to help mankind," declares Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gitâ. Whenever this world of ours, on account of growth, on account of added circumstances, requires a new adjustment, a wave of power comes, and as man is acting on two planes, the spiritual and the material, waves of adjustment come on both planes. On the one side, of adjustment on the material plane, Europe has mainly been the basis during modern times, and of the adjustment on the other, the spiritual plane, Asia has been the basis throughout the history of the world. To-day, man requires one more adjustment on the spiritual plane; to-day, when material ideas are at the

height of their glory and power; to-day, when man is likely to forget his divine nature, through his growing dependence on matter, and is likely to be reduced to a mere money-making machine, an adjustment is necessary, and the power is coming, the voice has spoken, to drive away the clouds of gathering materialism. The power has been set in motion which, at no distant date, will bring unto mankind once more the memory of their real nature, and again the place from which this power will start will be Asia. This world of ours is on the plan of the division of labor. It is vain to say that one man shall possess everything. Yet how childish we are! The baby in his childishness thinks that his doll is the only possession that is to be coveted in this whole universe. So a nation which is great in the possession of material powers thinks that that is all that is to be coveted, that that is

all that is meant by progress, that that is all that is meant by civilization, and if there are other nations which do not care to possess, and do not possess these powers, they are not fit to live, their whole existence is useless. On the other hand, another nation may think that mere material civilization is utterly useless. From the Orient came the voice which once told the world that if a man possess everything that is under the sun or above it, and does not possess spirituality, what matters it? This is the Oriental type, the other is the Occidental type.

Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonizing, the mingling of these two ideals. To the Oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the Occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the Oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to

him. To the Occidental he is a dreamer; to the Oriental, the Occidental is a dreamer, playing with dolls of five minutes, and he laughs to think that grown-up men and women should make so much of a handful of matter which they will have to leave sooner or later. Each calls the other a dreamer. But the Oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the Occidental, and I think it is more necessary. Machines never made mankind happy, and never will make. He who is trying to make us believe this, will claim that happiness is in the machine, but it is always in the mind. It is the man who is lord of his mind who alone can become happy, and none else. But what, after all, is this power of machinery? Why should a man who can send a current of electricity through a wire be called a very great man, and a very intelligent man? Does not na-

ture do a million times more than that every moment? Why not then fall down and worship nature? What matters it if you have power over the whole of the world, if you have mastered every atom in the universe? That will not make you happy unless you have the power of happiness in yourself, until you have conquered yourself. Man is born to conquer nature, it is true, but the Occidental means by "nature" only the physical or external nature. It is true that external nature is majestic, with its mountains, and oceans, and rivers, and with its infinite powers and varieties. Yet there is a more majestic internal nature of man, higher than the sun, moon and stars, higher than this earth of ours, higher than the physical universe, transcending these little lives of ours; and it affords another field of study. There the Orientals excel, just as the Occidentals excel in the other. There-

fore it is fitting that, whenever there is a spiritual adjustment, it should come from the Orient. It is also fitting that when the Oriental wants to learn about machine-making he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him. When the Occident wants to learn about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about the meaning and the mystery of this universe, she must sit at the feet of the Orient to learn.

I am going to present before you the life of one man who has been the mover of such a wave in India. But before going into the life of this man I will try to present before you the secret of India, what India means. If those whose eyes have been blinded by the glamor of material things, whose whole dedication of life is to eating and drinking and enjoying, whose whole ideal of possession is lands and gold, whose whole ideal of pleasure is in the sensations,

whose god is money, and whose goal is a life of ease and comfort in this world, and death after that, whose minds never look forward, and who rarely think of anything higher than the sense objects in the midst of which they live, if such as these go to India, what do they see? Poverty, squalor, superstition, darkness, hideousness everywhere. Why? Because in their minds enlightenment means dress, education, social politeness. Whereas Occidental nations have used every effort to improve their material position, India has done differently. There lives the only race in the world which, in the whole history of humanity, never went beyond their frontiers to conquer anyone, who never coveted that which belonged to anyone else, and whose only fault was that their lands were so fertile, and their wits so keen, that they accumulated wealth by the hard labor of their hands, and

so tempted other nations to come and despoil them. They are contented to be despoiled, and to be called barbarians, and in return they want to send to this world visions of the Supreme, to lay bare for the world the secrets of human nature, to rend the veil that conceals the real man, because they know the dream, because they know that behind this materialism lives the real divine nature of man which no sin can tarnish, no crime can spoil, no lust can kill, which the fire cannot burn, nor the water wet, which heat cannot dry, nor death kill; and to them this true nature of man is as real as is any material object to the senses of an Occidental. Just as you are brave to jump at the mouth of a cannon with a hurrah; just as you are brave in the name of patriotism to stand up and give up your lives for your country, so are they brave in the name of God. There it is that when a

man declares that this is a world of ideas, that it is all a dream, he casts off clothes and property to demonstrate that what he believes and thinks is true. There it is that a man sits on the banks of a river, when he has known that life is eternal, and wants to give up his body just as nothing, just as you can give up a bit of straw. Therein lies their heroism, ready to face death as a brother, because they are convinced that there is no death for them. Therein lies the strength that has made them invincible through hundreds of years of oppression and foreign invasions, and foreign tyranny. The nation lives to-day, and in that nation even in the days of the direst disaster, spiritual giants have never failed to arise. Asia produces giants in spirituality just as the Occident produces giants in politics, giants in science. In the beginning of the present century, when Western influence

began to pour into India, when Western conquerors, with sword in hand, came to demonstrate to the children of the sages that they were mere barbarians, a race of dreamers, that their religion was but mythology, and God and soul and everything they had been struggling for, were mere words without meaning, that the thousands of years of struggle, the thousands of years of endless renunciation, had all been in vain, the question began to be agitated among young men at the universities whether the whole national existence up to this date had been a failure, if they must begin anew on the Occidental plan, tear up their old books, burn their philosophies, drive away their preachers, and break down their temples.

Did not the Occidental conqueror, the man who demonstrated his religion with sword and gun, say that all the old ways

were mere superstition and idolatry? Children brought up and educated in the new schools started on the Occidental plan, drank in these ideas from their childhood and it is not to be wondered at that doubts arose. But instead of throwing away superstition and making a real search after truth, the test of truth became "What does the West say?" The priests must go, the Vedas must be burned, because the West has said so. Out of the feeling of unrest thus produced, there arose a wave of so-called reform in India.

If you wish to be a true reformer, three things are necessary. The first is to feel; do you really feel for your brothers? Do you really feel that there is so much misery in the world, so much ignorance and superstition? Do you really feel that men are your brothers? Does this idea come into your whole being? Does it run in your blood?

Does it tingle in your veins? Does it course through every nerve and filament of your body? Are you full of that idea of sympathy? If you are, that is only the first step. You must think next if you have found any remedy. The old ideas may be all superstition, but in and around these masses of superstition are nuggets of gold and truth. Have you discovered means by which to keep that gold alone, without any of the dross? If you have done that, that is only the second step, one more thing is necessary. What is your motive? Are you sure that you are not actuated by greed for gold, by thirst for fame, or power? Are you really sure that you can stand to your ideals, and work on, even if the whole world wants to crush you down? Are you sure you know what you want, and will perform your duty, and that alone, even if your life is at stake? Are you sure that you will perse-

vere so long as life endures, so long as one pulsation in the heart will last? Then you are a real reformer, you are a teacher, a master, a blessing to mankind! But man is so impatient, so short-sighted! He has not the patience to wait, he has not the power to see. He wants to rule, he wants results immediately. Why? He wants to reap the fruits himself, and does not really care for others. Duty for duty's sake is not what he wants. "To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof," says Krishna. Why cling to results? Ours are the duties. Let the fruits take care of themselves. But man has no patience, he takes up any scheme and the larger number of would-be reformers all over the world, can be classed under this heading.

As I have said, the idea of reform came to India when it seemed as if the wave of materialism that had invaded her shores

would sweep away the teachings of the Sages. But the nation had borne the shocks of a thousand such waves of change. This one was mild in comparison. Wave after wave had flooded the land, breaking and crushing everything for hundreds of years; the sword had flashed, and "Victory unto Allah" had rent the skies of India, but these floods subsided, leaving the national ideals unchanged.

The Indian nation cannot be killed. Deathless it stands and it will stand so long as that spirit shall remain as the background, so long as her people do not give up their spirituality. Beggars they may remain, poor and poverty-stricken; dirt and squalor may surround them perhaps throughout all time, but let them not give up their God, let them not forget that they are the children of the Sages. Just as in the West even the man in the street wants to

trace his descent from some robber-baron of the Middle Ages, so in India even an Emperor on the throne wants to trace his descent from some beggar-sage in the forest, from a man who wore the bark of a tree, lived upon the fruits of the forest and communed with God. That is the type of descent we want, and while holiness is thus supremely venerated, India cannot die.

It was while reforms of various kinds were being inaugurated in India, that a child was born of poor Brahmin parents on the 20th of February, 1835, in one of the remote villages of Bengal. The father and mother were very orthodox people. The life of a really orthodox Brahmin is one of continuous renunciation. Very few things can he do, and over and beyond them the orthodox Brahmin must not occupy himself with any secular business. At the same time he must not receive gifts from every-

body. You may imagine how rigorous that life becomes. You have heard of the Brahmins and their priest-craft many times, but very few of you have ever stopped to ask what makes this wonderful band of men the rulers of their fellows. They are the poorest of all the classes in the country, and the secret of their power lies in their renunciation. They never covet wealth. Theirs is the poorest priesthood in the world, and therefore the most powerful. Even in this poverty, a Brahmin's wife will never allow a poor man to pass through the village without giving him something to eat. That is considered the highest duty of the mother in India; and because she is the mother it is her duty to be served last; she must see that everyone is served before her turn comes. That is why the mother is regarded as God in India. This particular woman, the mother of our present subject, was the

very type of a Hindu mother. The higher the caste the greater the restrictions. The lowest caste people can eat and drink anything they like, but as men rise in the social scale more and more restrictions come, and when they reach the highest caste the Brahmin, the hereditary priesthood of India, their lives, as I have said, are very much circumscribed. Compared to western manners their lives are of continuous asceticism. But they have great steadiness; when they get hold of an idea they carry it out to its very conclusion, and they keep hold of it generation after generation until they make something out of it. Once give them an idea and it is not easy to take it back again, but it is hard to make them grasp a new idea.

The orthodox Hindus therefore, are very exclusive, living entirely within their own horizon of thought and feeling. Their lives

are laid down in our old books in every little detail, and the least detail is grasped with almost adamantine firmness by them. They would starve rather than eat a meal cooked by the hands of a man not belonging to their own small section of caste. But withal, they have intensity and tremendous earnestness. That force of intense faith and religious life occurs often among the orthodox Hindus, because their very orthodoxy comes from the tremendous conviction that it is right. We may not all think that that to which they hold on with such perseverance is right, but to them it is. Now it is written in our books that a man should always be charitable even to the extreme. If a man starves himself to death to help another man, to save that man's life, it is all right; it is even held that a man ought to do that. And it is expected of a Brahmin to carry this idea out to the very ex-

treme. Those who are acquainted with the literature of India will remember a beautiful old story about this extreme charity, how a whole family, as related in the Mahâbhârata, starved themselves to death and gave their last meal to a beggar. This is not an exaggeration, for such things still exist. The characters of the father and mother of my Master were very much like that. Very poor they were and yet many a time the mother would starve herself a whole day to help a poor man. Of them this child was born and he was a peculiar child from very babyhood. He remembered his past from his birth, and was conscious for what purpose he came into the world, and every power was devoted to the fulfilment of that purpose. While he was quite young his father died and the boy was sent to school. A Brahmin's boy must go to school; the caste restricts him to a

learned profession only. The old system of education in India, still prevalent in many parts of the country, especially in connection with Sannyâsins, was very different from the modern system. The students had not to pay. It was thought that knowledge is so sacred that no man ought to sell it. Knowledge must be given freely and without any price. The teachers used to take students without charge, and not only so, but most of them gave their students food and clothes. To support these teachers the wealthy families on certain occasions, such as a marriage festival, or at the ceremonies for the dead, made gifts to them. They were considered the first and foremost claimants to certain gifts, and they in their turn had to maintain their students. This boy about whom I am speaking had an elder brother, a learned professor, and went to study with him. After a short time

the boy became convinced that the aim of all secular learning was mere material advancement, and he resolved to give up study and devote himself to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge. The father being dead, the family was very poor, and this boy had to make his own living. He went to a place near Calcutta and became a temple priest. To become a temple priest is thought very degrading to a Brahmin. Our temples are not churches in your sense of the word, they are not places for public worship, for, properly speaking, there is no such thing as public worship in India. Temples are erected mostly by rich persons as a meritorious religious act.

If a man has much property he wants to build a temple. In that he puts a symbol or an image of an Incarnation of God, and dedicates it to worship in the name of God. The worship is akin to that which is con-

ducted in Roman Catholic churches, very much like the Mass, reading certain sentences from the Sacred Books, waving a light before the image, and treating the image in every respect as we treat a great man. This is all that is done in the temple. The man who goes to a temple is not considered thereby a better man than he who never goes. More properly the latter is considered the more religious man, for religion in India is to each man his own private affair and all his worship is conducted in the privacy of his own home. It has been held from the most ancient times in our country that it is a degenerating occupation to become a temple priest. There is another idea behind it, that, just as with education, but in a far more intense sense with religion, the fact that temple priests take fees for their work is making merchandise of sacred things. So you may imagine the

feelings of that boy when he was forced through poverty to take up the only occupation open to him, that of a temple priest.

There have been various poets in Bengal whose songs have passed down to the people; they are sung in the streets of Calcutta and in every village. Most of these are religious songs, and their one central idea, which is perhaps peculiar to the religions of India, is the idea of realization. There is not a book in India on religion which does not breathe this idea. Man must realize God, feel God, see God, talk to God. That is religion. The Indian atmosphere is full of stories of saintly persons having visions of God. Such doctrines form the basis of their religion; and all these ancient books and scriptures are the writings of persons who came into direct contact with spiritual facts. These books were not written for the intellect, nor can any reasoning understand

them, because they have been written by men who have seen the things of which they write, and they can be understood only by men who have raised themselves to the same height. They say there is such a thing as realization even in this life, and it is open to everyone, and religion begins with the opening of this faculty, if I may call it so. This is the central idea in all religions and this is why we may find one man with the most finished oratorical powers, or the most convincing logic, preaching the highest doctrines and yet unable to get people to listen to him; and another, a poor man, who scarcely can speak the language of his own motherland, yet with half the nation worshipping him in his own lifetime as God. The idea somehow or other has got abroad that he has raised himself to that state of realization, that religion is no more a matter of conjecture to him, that he

is no more groping in the dark in such momentous questions as religion, the immortality of the soul, and God; and people come from all quarters to see him and gradually they begin to worship him as an Incarnation of God.

In the temple was an image of the "Blissful Mother." This boy had to conduct the worship morning and evening and by and by this one idea filled his mind,—"Is there anything behind this image? Is it true that there is a Mother of Bliss in the universe? Is it true that she lives and guides this universe, or is it all a dream? Is there any reality in religion?" This scepticism comes to almost every Hindu child. It is the standing scepticism of our country—is this that we are doing real? And theories will not satisfy us, although there are ready at hand almost all the theories that have ever been made with regard to God and soul.

Neither books nor theories can satisfy us, the one idea that gets hold of thousands of our people is this idea of realization. Is it true that there is a God? If it be true, can I see Him? Can I realize the truth? The Western mind may think all this very impracticable, but to us it is intensely practical. For this idea men will give up their lives. For this idea thousands of Hindus every year give up their homes and many of them die through the hardships they have to undergo. To the Western mind this must seem most visionary, and I can see the reason for this point of view. But after years of residence in the West, I still think this idea the most practical thing in life.

Life is but momentary whether you are a toiler in the streets, or an Emperor ruling millions. Life is but momentary, whether you have the best of health or the worst.

There is but one solution of life, says the Hindu, and that solution is what they call God and Religion. If these be true, life becomes explained, life becomes bearable, becomes enjoyable. Otherwise, life is but a useless burden. That is our idea, but no amount of reasoning can demonstrate it; it can only make it probable, and there it rests. Facts are only in the senses and we have to sense Religion to demonstrate it to ourselves. We have to sense God to be convinced that there is a God. Nothing but our own perceptions can make these things real to us.

This idea took possession of the boy and his whole life became concentrated upon that. Day after day he would weep and say: "Mother, is it true that Thou existest, or is it all poetry? Is the Blissful Mother an imagination of poets and misguided people, or is there such a reality?"

We have seen that of books, of education in our sense of the word, he had none and so much the more natural, so much the more healthy was his mind, so much the purer his thoughts, undiluted by drinking in the thoughts of others. This thought which was uppermost in his mind gained in strength every day until he could think of nothing else. He could no more conduct the worship properly, could no more attend to the various details in all their minuteness. Often he would forget to place the food offering before the image, sometimes he would forget to wave the light, other times he would wave the lights a whole day, and forget everything else. At last it became impossible for him to serve in the temple. He left it and entered into a little wood that was near and lived there. About this part of his life he has told me many times that he could not tell when the

sun rose or set, nor how he lived. He lost all thought of himself and forgot to eat. During this period he was lovingly watched over by a relative who put into his mouth food which he mechanically swallowed.

Days and nights thus passed with the boy. When a whole day would pass, towards evening, when the peals of bells in the temples would reach the forest, the chimes, and the voices of the persons singing, it would make the boy very sad, and he would cry: "One day is gone in vain, Mother, and Thou dost not come. One day of this short life has gone and I have not known the Truth." In the agony of his soul, sometimes he would rub his face against the ground and weep.

This is the tremendous thirst that seizes the human heart. Later on, this very man said to me: "My child, suppose there is a

bag of gold in one room, and a robber in the room next to it, do you think that robber can sleep? He can not. His mind will be always thinking how to get into that room and get possession of that gold. Do you think then that a man firmly persuaded that there is a reality behind all these sensations, that there is a God, that there is One who never dies, One that is the infinite amount of all bliss, a bliss compared to which these pleasures of the senses are simply playthings, can rest contented without struggling to attain it? Can he cease his efforts for a moment? No. He will become mad with longing." This divine madness seized this boy. At that time he had no teacher; nobody to tell him anything except that everyone thought that he was out of his mind. This is the ordinary condition of things. If a man throws aside the vanities of the world we hear him called mad,

but such men are the salt of the earth. Out of such madness have come the powers that have moved this world of ours, and out of such madness alone will come the powers of the future, that are going to be in the world. So days, weeks, months passed in continuous struggle of the soul to arrive at Truth. The boy began to see visions, to see wonderful things, the secrets of his nature were beginning to open to him. Veil after veil was, as it were, being taken off. Mother Herself became the teacher, and initiated the boy into the truths he sought. At this time there came to this place a woman, beautiful to look at, learned beyond compare. Later on this Saint used to say about her that she was not learned, but was the embodiment of learning; she was learning itself, in human form. There too, you find the peculiarity of the Indian nation. In the midst of the ignorance in which the average

Hindu woman lives, in the midst of what is called in western countries her lack of freedom, there could arise a woman of this supreme spirituality. She was a Sannyâsinî, for women also give up the world, throw away their property, do not marry, and devote themselves to the worship of the Lord. She came, and when she heard of this boy in the forest she offered to go to see him, and hers was the first help he received. At once she recognized what his trouble was, and she said to him: "My son, blessed is the man upon whom such madness comes. The whole of this universe is mad; some for wealth, some for pleasure, some for fame, some for a hundred other things. Blessed is the man who is mad after God. Such men are very few." This woman remained near the boy for years, taught him the forms of the religions of India, initiated him in the different practices of Yoga, and, as it were,

guided and brought into harmony this tremendous river of spirituality.

Later there came to the same forest, a Sannyâsin, one of the beggar-friars of India, a learned man, a philosopher. He was a peculiar man, he was an idealist. He did not believe that this world existed in reality, and to demonstrate that he would never go under a roof, he would always live out of doors, in storm and sunshine alike. This man began to teach the boy the philosophy of the Vedas, and he found very soon, to his astonishment, that the pupil was in some respects wiser than the master. He spent several months there with the boy, after which he initiated him into the order of Sannyâsins and took his departure.

The relatives of this boy thought that his madness could be cured if they could get him married. Sometimes in India young children are married by their parents and

relatives without giving their own consent in the matter. This boy had been married at the age of about eighteen to a little girl of five. Of course such a marriage is but a betrothal. The real marriage takes place when the wife grows older, when it is customary for the husband to go and bring his bride to his own home. In this case, however, the husband had entirely forgotten he had a wife. In her far-off home the girl had heard that her husband had become a religious enthusiast and that he was even considered insane by many. She resolved to learn the truth for herself, so she set out and walked to the place where her husband was. When at last she stood in her husband's presence, he at once admitted her right to his life; although in India any person, man or woman, who embraces a religious life is thereby freed from all other obligations. The young man fell at the feet

of his wife and said: "I have learned to look upon every woman as Mother, but I am at your service."

The maiden was a pure and noble soul, and was able to understand her husband's aspirations and sympathize with them. She quickly told him that she had no wish to drag him down to a life of worldliness; but that all she desired was to remain near him, to serve him, and to learn of him. She became one of his most devoted disciples, always revering him as a divine being. Thus through his wife's consent the last barrier was removed and he was free to lead the life he had chosen.

The next desire that seized upon the soul of this man was to know the truth about the various religions. Up to that time he had not known any religion but his own. He wanted to understand what other religions were like. So he sought teachers of

other religions. By teachers you must always remember what we mean in India—not a book-worm, but a man of realization, one who knows truth at first-hand and not centuries after. He found a Mohammedan Saint and went to live with him; he underwent the disciplines prescribed by him, and to his astonishment found that when faithfully carried out, these devotional methods led him to the same goal he had already attained. He gathered similar experience from following the true religion of Jesus the Christ. He went to the various sects existing in our country that were available to him, and whatever he took up he went into it with his whole heart. He did exactly as he was told, and in every instance he arrived at the same result. Thus from actual experience he came to know that the goal of every religion is the same, that each is trying to teach the same thing, the differ-

ence being largely in method, and still more in language. At the core, all sects and all religions have the same aim.

Then came to him the conviction that to be perfect, the sex idea must go, because soul has no sex, soul is neither male nor female. It is only in the body that sex exists, and the man who desires to reach the spirit cannot at the same time hold to sex distinctions. Having been born in a masculine body, this man now wanted to bring the feminine idea into everything. He began to think that he was a woman, he dressed like a woman, spoke like a woman, gave up the occupations of men, and lived among the women of his own family, until, after years of this discipline, his mind became changed, and he entirely forgot the idea of sex; all thought of that vanished and the whole view of life became changed to him.

We hear in the West about worshipping woman, but this is usually for her youth and beauty. This man meant by worshipping woman, that to him every woman's face was that of the Blissful Mother, and nothing but that. I myself have seen this man standing before those women whom society would not touch, and falling at their feet bathed in tears, saying: "Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form Thou art the universe. I salute Thee, Mother, I salute Thee." Think of the blessedness of that life from which all carnality has vanished, when every woman's face has become transfigured, and only the face of the Divine Mother, the Blissful One, the Protectress of the human race shines upon the man who can look upon every woman with that love and reverence! That is what we want. Do you mean to say that the divinity behind every woman can ever

be cheated? It never was and never will be. Unconsciously it asserts itself. Unfailingly it detects fraud, it detects hypocrisy, unerringly it feels the warmth of truth, the light of spirituality, the holiness of purity. Such purity is absolutely necessary if real spirituality is to be attained.

This rigorous, unsullied purity came into the life of that man; all the struggles which we have in our lives were past for him. His hard-earned jewels of spirituality, for which he had given three-quarters of his life, were now ready to be given to humanity, and then began his mission. His teaching and preaching were peculiar, he would never take the position of a teacher. In our country a teacher is a most highly venerated person, he is regarded as God Himself. We have not even the same respect for our father and mother. Father and mother give us our body, but the teacher shows us the

way to salvation. We are his children, we are born in the spiritual line of the teacher. All Hindus come to pay respect to an extraordinary teacher, they crowd around him. And here was such a teacher, but the teacher had no thought whether he was to be respected or not, he had not the least idea that he was a great teacher, he thought that it was Mother who was doing everything and not he. He always said: "If any good comes from my lips, it is the Mother who speaks; what have I to do with it?" That was his one idea about his work, and to the day of his death he never gave it up. This man sought no one. His principle was, first form character, first earn spirituality, and results will come of themselves. His favorite illustration was, "When the lotus opens, the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey, so let the lotus of your character be full-blown and the results

will follow." This is a great lesson to learn. My Master taught me this lesson hundreds of times, yet I often forget it. Few understand the power of thought. If a man goes into a cave, shuts himself in, and thinks one really great thought and dies, that thought will penetrate the adamantine walls of that cave, vibrate through space, and at last penetrate the whole human race. Such is the power of thought; be in no hurry therefore to give your thoughts to others. First have something to give. He alone teaches who has something to give, for teaching is not talking, teaching is not imparting doctrines, it is communicating. Spirituality can be communicated just as really as I can give you a flower. This is true in the most literal sense. This idea is very old in India and finds illustration in the West in the belief, in the theory, of apostolic succession. Therefore, first make character—that is the

highest duty you can perform. Know Truth for yourself, and there will be many to whom you can teach it afterwards; they will all come. This was the attitude of my Master—he criticised no one.

For years I lived with that man, but never did I hear those lips utter one word of condemnation for any sect. He had the same sympathy for all of them; he had found the harmony between them. A man may be intellectual, or devotional, or mystic, or active, and the various religions represent one or the other of these types. Yet it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his idea. He condemned no one, but saw the good in all.

People came by thousands to see this wonderful man, to hear him speak in a patois, every word of which was forceful and instinct with light. For it is not what

is spoken, much less the language in which it is spoken, it is the personality of the speaker which dwells in everything he says that carries weight. Every one of us feels this at times. We hear most splendid orations, most wonderfully reasoned out discourses, and we go home and forget it all. At other times we hear a few words in the simplest of language, and they accompany us all our lives, become part and parcel of ourselves and produce lasting results. The words of a man who can put his personality into them take effect, but he must have tremendous personality. All teaching is giving and taking, the teacher gives and the taught receives, but the one must have something to give, and the other must be open to receive.

This man came to live near Calcutta, the capital of India, the most important university town in our country, which was send-

ing out sceptics and materialists by the hundreds every year, yet the great men from the different universities used to come and listen to him. I heard of this man, and I went to hear him. He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought, "Can this man be a great teacher?" I crept near to him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life: "Do you believe in God, sir?" "Yes," he replied. "Can you prove it, sir?" "Yes." "How?" "Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense." That impressed me at once. For the first time I had found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. I began to come near that man, day after day, and I actually saw

that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can make a whole life change. I had read about Buddha and Christ and Mohammed, about all those different luminaries of ancient times, how they would stand up and say, "Be thou whole," and the man became whole. I now found it to be true, and when I myself saw this man, all scepticism was brushed aside. It could be done, and my Master used to say: "Religion can be given and taken more tangibly, more really than anything else in the world." Be therefore spiritual first; have something to give, and then stand before the world and give it. Religion is not talk, nor doctrines nor theories, nor is it sectarianism. Religion cannot live in sects and societies. It is the relation between the soul and God; how can it be made into a society? It would then degenerate into a business, and wherever there is business, or

business principles in religion, spirituality dies. Religion does not consist in erecting temples, or building churches, or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books, nor in words, nor in lectures, nor in organizations. Religion consists in realization. As a fact, we all know that nothing will satisfy us until we know the truth for ourselves. However we may argue, however much we may hear, but one thing will satisfy us, and that is our own realization, and such an experience is possible for every one of us, if we will only try. The first ideal of this attempt to realize religion is that of renunciation. As far as we can, we must give up. Light and darkness, enjoyment of the world and enjoyment of God will never go together. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

The second idea that I learned from my Master, and which is perhaps the most

vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory nor antagonistic; they are but various phases of One Eternal Religion. One Infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can. Religions manifest themselves not only according to race and geographical position, but according to individual powers. In one man religion is manifesting itself as intense activity, as work. In another it is manifesting itself as intense devotion, in yet another as mysticism, in others as philosophy, and so forth. It is wrong when we say to others: "Your methods are not right." To learn this central secret that the Truth may be one and yet many at the same time, that we may

have different visions of the same Truth from different standpoints, is exactly what must be done. Then, instead of antagonism to anyone, we shall have infinite sympathy with all. Knowing that as long as there are different natures born into this world they will require different applications of the same religious truths, we shall understand that we are bound to have forbearance with each other. Just as nature is unity in variety, an infinite variation in the phenomenal, and behind all these variations, the Infinite, the Unchangeable, the Absolute, so it is with every man; the microcosm is but a miniature repetition of the macrocosm; in spite of all these variations, in and through them all runs this eternal harmony, and we have to recognize this. This idea, above all other ideas, I find to be the crying necessity of the day. Coming from a country which is a hotbed of re-

ligious sects—through good fortune or ill fortune, everyone who has a religious idea wants to send an advance guard there—from my childhood I have been acquainted with the various sects of the world; even the Mormons came to preach in India. Welcome them all! That is the soil on which to preach religion. There it takes root more than in any other country. If you come and teach politics to the Hindus they do not understand, but if you come to preach religion, however curious it may be, you will have hundreds and thousands of followers in no time, and you have every chance of becoming a living god in your life time. I am glad it is so, it is the one thing we want in India. The sects among the Hindus are various, almost infinite in number, and some of them apparently hopelessly contradictory. Yet they all tell you they are but different manifestations of

Religion. "As different rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running crooked or straight, all come and mingle their waters in the ocean, so the different sects, with their different points of view, at last all come unto Thee." This is not a theory, it has to be recognized, but not in that patronizing way which we see with some. "Oh, yes, there are some very good things." (Some even have the most wonderfully liberal idea that other religions are all little bits of a prehistoric evolution, but "ours is the fulfilment of things.") One man says because his is the oldest religion it is the best; another makes the same claim because his is the latest. We have to recognize that each one of them has the same saving power as every other. It is a mass of superstition that you have heard everywhere, either in the temple or the church, that there is any difference.

The same God answers all, and it is not you, nor I, nor any body of men, that is responsible for the safety and salvation of the least little bit of the soul; the same Almighty God is responsible for all of them. I do not understand how people declare themselves to be believers in God, and at the same time think that God has handed over to a little body of men all truth, and that they are the guardians of the rest of humanity. Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. If you can give him something better, if you can get hold of a man where he stands and give him a push upwards, do so, but do not destroy what he has. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and

see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else. All these negative, breaking-down, destructive teachers that are in the world can never do any good.

In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never even criticised anyone. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality. "Neither through wealth, nor through progeny, but through renunciation alone, is immortality to be reached," say the Vedas. "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and follow me," says the Christ.

So all great saints and prophets have ex-

pressed it, and have carried it out in their lives. How can great spirituality come without that renunciation? Renunciation is the background of all religious thought wherever it be, and you will always find that as this idea of renunciation lessens, the more will the senses creep into the field of religion, and spirituality will decrease in the same ratio. That man was the embodiment of renunciation. In our country it is necessary for a man who becomes a Sannyâsin to give up all worldly wealth and position, and this my Master carried out literally. There were many who would have felt themselves blest, if he would only have accepted a present from their hands, who would gladly have given him thousands if he would have taken them, but these were the only men from whom he would turn away. He was a triumphant example, a living realization of the complete conquest of lust and desire

for money. He was beyond all ideas of either, and such men are necessary for this century. Such renunciation is necessary in these days when men have begun to think that they cannot live a month without what they call their "necessities," and which they are increasing in geometrical ratio. It is necessary in a time like this that a man shall arise to demonstrate to the sceptics of the world that there yet breathes a man who does not care a straw for all the gold or all the fame that is in the universe. Yet there are such men.

The first part of my Master's life was spent in acquiring spirituality, and the remaining years in distributing it. Men came in crowds to hear him and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty-four, and that not for one day, but for months and months, until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous

strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually there developed a vital throat disorder and yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him he would insist upon having them admitted and would answer all their questions. There was no rest for him. Once a man asked him: "Sir, you are a great Yogi, why do you not put your mind a little on your body and cure your disease?" At first he did not answer, but when the question had been repeated he gently said: "My friend, I have thought you were a sage, but you talk like other men of the world. This mind has been given to the Lord, do you mean to say that I should take it back and put it upon the body which is but a mere cage of the soul?"

So he went on preaching to the people, and the news spread that his body was about to pass away, and the people began to flock to him in greater crowds than ever. You cannot imagine the way they come to these great religious teachers in India, crowd around them and make gods of them while they are yet living. Thousands are ready to touch simply the hem of their garments. It is through this appreciation of spirituality in others that spirituality is produced. Whatever any man wants and appreciates, that he will get, and it is the same with nations. If you go to India and deliver a political lecture, however grand it may be, you will scarcely find people to listen to you, but just go and teach religion, *live* it, not merely talk it, and hundreds will crowd just to look at you, to touch your feet. When the people heard that this holy man was likely to go from them soon, they be-

gan to come around him more than ever before, and my Master went on teaching them without the least regard for his health. We could not prevent this. Many of the people came from long distances, and he would not rest until he had answered their questions. "While I can speak I must teach them," he would say, and he was as good as his word. One day he told us that he would lay down the body that day, and repeating the most sacred word of the Vedas he entered into *Samâdhi* and so passed away.

His thoughts and his message were known to very few who were capable of teaching them. Among others, he left a few young boys who had renounced the world, and were ready to carry on his work. Attempts were made to crush them. But they stood firm, having the inspiration of that great life before them. Having had

the contact of that blessed life for years, they stood their ground. These young men were living as Sannyâsins, begging through the streets of the city where they were born, although some of them came from first-class families. At first they met with great antagonism, but they persevered and went on from day to day spreading all over India the message of that great man, until the whole country was filled with the ideas he had preached. This man from a remote village of Bengal, without education, simply by the sheer force of his own determination, realized the truth and gave it to others, leaving only a few young boys to keep it alive.

To-day the name of Sri Râmakrishna Paramhamsa is known all over India with its millions of people. Nay, the power of that man has spread beyond India, and if there has ever been a word of truth, a word of

spirituality that I have spoken anywhere in the world, I owe it to my Master; only the mistakes are mine.

This is the message of Sri Râmakrishna to the modern world. "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man which is spirituality, and the more that this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, nor names, nor sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those that have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore, my Master's message to mankind is, "Be spiritual and realize truth for yourself." He would have you give up for the sake of your fellow beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realization, and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel, and then only will you be ready to help humanity. To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great Teacher of the nine-

teenth century made no claim for himself he left every religion undisturbed because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of one Eternal Religion.

## PARAMHAMSA SRIMAT RAMAKRISHNA

The following brief account of this extraordinary man is taken from an article written by Protap Chunder Mazoomdar, which appeared in the *Theistic Quarterly Review*, October, 1879. It serves to show the sentiments he inspired among his contemporaries. Even the celebrated leader of the Brahmo-Somaj, Keshub Chandra Sen, often came to hear Sri Ramakrishna and was influenced by his teachings to a considerable extent. He was born on the 20th of February, 1833. He left this world on the 16th of August, 1886.

# PARAMHAMSA SRIMAT RAMAKRISHNA

MY mind is still floating in the luminous atmosphere which that wonderful man diffuses around him whenever and wherever he goes. My mind is not yet disenchanted of the mysterious and indefinable pathos which he pours into it whenever he meets me. What is there in common between him and me? I, a Europeanized, civilized, self-centered, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Müller, and a whole host of European scholars and divines? I who am an ardent disciple and follower of Christ, a friend and

admirer of liberal-minded Christian missionaries and preachers, a devoted adherent and worker of the rationalistic Brahmo-Somaj—why should I be spellbound to hear him? And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same. He has been interviewed and examined by many, crowds pour in to visit and talk with him. Some of our clever intellectual fools have found nothing in him, some of the contemptuous Christian missionaries would call him an impostor, or a self-deluded enthusiast. I have weighed their objections well, and what I write now I write deliberately.

The Hindu saint is a man under forty. He is a Brahmin by caste, he is well-formed in body naturally, but the dreadful austerities through which his character has developed appear to have disordered his system. Yet, in the midst of this emaciation his face retains a fullness, a child-like ten-

derness, a profound visible humbleness, an unspeakable sweetness of expression and a smile that I have seen on no other face that I can remember. A Hindu saint is always particular about his externals. He wears the *garua* cloth, eats according to strict forms, refuses to have intercourse with men, and is a rigid observer of caste. He is always proud and professes secret wisdom. He is always *guruji*, a universal counsellor and a dispenser of charms. This man is singularly devoid of such claims. His dress and diet do not differ from those of other men except in the general negligence he shows towards both, and as to caste, he openly breaks it every day. He most vehemently repudiates the title of *guru*, or teacher, he shows impatient displeasure at any exceptional honor which people try to pay to him, and emphatically disclaims the knowledge of secrets and mysteries. He

protests against being lionized, and openly shows his strong dislike to be visited and praised by the curious. The society of the worldly-minded and carnally-inclined he carefully shuns. He has nothing extraordinary about him. His religion is his only recommendation. And what is his religion? It is orthodox Hinduism, but. Hinduism of a strange type. Râmakrishna Paramhamsa (for that is the name of this saint), is the worshipper of no particular Hindu god. He is not a Shivaite, he is not a Shakta, he is not a Vaishnava, he is not a Vedantist. Yet he is *all these*. He worships Shiva, he worships Kâli, he worships Râma, he worships Krishna, and is a confirmed advocate of Vedantist doctrines. He accepts all the doctrines, all the embodiments, usages, and devotional practices of every religious cult. Each in turn is infallible to him. He is an idolater, yet is a faithful and most devoted

meditator of the perfections of the one formless, infinite Deity whom he terms, "*Akhanda Sach-chidânanda*," ("Indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.") His religion, unlike the religion of ordinary Hindu *sadhus*, does not mean too much dogma, or controversial proficiency, or the outward worship with flowers and sandal-wood; incense and offering. His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcendental insight, his whole nature burns day and night with the permanent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling. His conversation is a ceaseless breaking forth of this inward fire and lasts long hours. While his interlocutors are weary, he, though outwardly feeble, is as fresh as ever. He merges into rapturous ecstasy and outward unconsciousness often during the day, oftenest in conversation when he speaks of his favorite spiritual experiences, or hears any striking

response to them. But how is it possible that he has such a fervent regard for all the Hindu deities together? What is the secret of his singular eclecticism? To him each of these deities is a force, an incarnated principle tending to reveal the supreme relation of the soul to that eternal and formless Being Who is unchangeable in His blessedness and the Light of Wisdom.

Take for instance Shiva. The saint views and realizes Shiva as the incarnation of contemplativeness and Yoga. Forgetful of all worldly care and concern, merged and absorbed in *Samâdhi,* in the meditation of the ineffable perfections of the supreme *Brahman,* insensible to pain and privation, toil and loneliness, ever joyful in the blessedness of Divine communion, calm, silent, serene, immovable like the Himâlayas where his abode is, *Mahadeo* is the ideal of all contemplative and self-absorbed men. The

venomous serpents of evil and worldliness coil around his beatified form but cannot hurt him. The presence of death surrounds him in various forms of dread and danger, but cannot daunt him. Shiva takes upon himself the burdens and cares of all the world, and swallows the deadliest poison to confer immortality upon others. Shiva renounces all wealth and enjoyment for the benefit of others, makes his faithful wife the companion of his austerities and solitude, and takes the ashes and the tiger skin as his only ornaments. Shiva is the god of the Yogis. And this good man, while expatiating on the attributes of Shiva, would be immersed in the sublimity of his ideal, and become entranced, and remain unconscious for a long time.

Then, perhaps, he would talk of Krishna, whom he realizes as the incarnation of love. "Behold," he says, "the countenance of

Krishna as represented popularly. Does it resemble a man's face, or a woman's? Is there a shadow of sensuality in it; is there a hair of masculine coarseness? It is a tender female face that Krishna has; in it is the fullness of boyish delicacy and girlish grace. By his affectionateness, many sided and multiform, he won the hearts of men and women to the religion of *Bhakti* (Devotion). That Divine love can take the form of every sanctified human relation is the great mission of Krishna to prove. As a loving child monopolizing all the fondness of the hearts of aged parents; as a loving companion and friend attracting the profoundest loyalty and affection of men and brethren; as an admired and adored master, the sweetness and tenderness of whose teaching and whose affectionate persuasions converted girls and women to the self-consecration of a heartfelt piety, Krishna, the beauty and

depth of whose character remain still beyond the reach of men's appreciation, introduced the religion of love into Hindustan. Then the good man would say how for long years he dressed himself as a cowherd, or a milkmaid, to be able to realize the experiences of that form of piety in which the human soul was like a faithful wife, and a loyal friend to the loving Spirit who is our Lord and only friend. Krishna is the incarnation of Bhakti. Then in the intensity of that burning love of God which is in his simple heart, the devotee's form and features suddenly grow stiff and motionless, unconsciousness overtakes him, his eyes lose their sight, and tears trickle down his fixed, pale, but smiling face. There is a transcendent sense and meaning in that unconsciousness. What he perceives and enjoys in his soul when he has lost all outward perception who can say? Who will fathom the

depth of that insensibility which the love of God produces? But that he sees something, hears, and enjoys when he is dead to all the outward world there is no doubt. If not, why should he, in the midst of that unconsciousness, burst into floods of tears and break out into prayers, songs and utterances the force and pathos of which pierce through the hardest heart, and bring tears to eyes that never before wept under the influence of religion?

Anon he would begin to talk of Kâli, whom he addresses as his mother. She is the incarnation of the *Shakti*, or power of God as displayed in the character and influence of woman. Kâli is the female principle in the nature of the Deity. She tyrannizes over all tyrants. She brings down her husband low upon the ground, and places her foot upon his bosom. She charms and conquers all beings. Yet she is the mother

of creation. Her tremendous power is a guarantee that she can save and protect her children, those that come to her as their mother, and ask the shelter of her feet. Her motherly solicitude excites the tenderest filial affection in the hearts of her devotees, and the inspiration of Ramprosad Sen which expressed itself in the most wonderful songs of filial piety ever sung, bears strange testimony to the reality and effectiveness of the worship of Kâli. The adoration of *Shakti* (which literally means Force) is, according to our saint, a child-like, whole-souled, rapturous self-consecration to the motherhood of God as represented by the power and influence of woman. Woman, therefore, has long been renounced by our friend in every material and carnal relation. He has a wife but has never associated with her. Woman, he says, is unconquerable by man except by

him who looks up to her as a son. Woman fascinates and keeps the whole world from the love of God. The highest and holiest saints have been brought back to carnality and sin by the nameless power of woman. The absolute conquest of lust has been his lifelong ambition. For long years, therefore, he says, he made the utmost efforts to be delivered from the influence of woman. His heart-rending supplications and prayers for such deliverance, sometimes uttered aloud in his retreat on the river-side, brought crowds of people who bitterly cried when he cried, and could not help blessing him and wishing him success with their whole hearts.

He has successfully escaped the evil of carnality which he dreaded. His Mother to whom he prayed, that is the goddess Kâli, made him recognize every woman as her incarnation, so that he now honors each

member of the other sex as his mother. He bows his head to the ground before women, and before little girls; he has insisted upon worshipping not a few of them as a son might worship his mother. The purity of his thoughts and relations towards women is most unique and instructive. It is the opposite of the European idea. It is an attitude essentially, traditionally, gloriously national. Yes, a Hindu *can* honor woman.

"My father," says the Paramhamsa, "was a worshipper of Râma. I, too, have accepted the Râmayat covenant. When I think of the piety of my father, the flowers with which he used to worship his favorite god bloom again in my heart and fill it with Divine fragrance." Râma the truthful and dutiful son, the good and faithful husband, the just and fatherly king, the staunch and affectionate friend, is regarded by him with

the love and profound loyalty of a devoted servant. As a master the privilege of whose service is sufficient reward to the favored, faithful servant, as a master in whose dear and matchless service the laying down of life is a delightful duty, as a master who has wholly enslaved the body and soul of his adoring slave, the contemplation of whose holy and glorious worth transcends every thought of remuneration and return, is Râma viewed by Râmakrishna. Hanuman, the renowned follower of Râma, is to him a model of a faithful servitor, a being who was devoted to his master's cause, inspired by such unworldly love and honor, such superhuman faithfulness as scorned alike death and danger, or hope of reward. So the other sin which he spent his life to be free from, is the love of money. The sight of money fills him with strange dread. His avoidance of women and wealth is the

whole secret of his matchless moral character. For a long time he practised a singular discipline. He took in one hand a piece of gold and in the other a lump of earth. He would then look at both, repeatedly calling the gold *earth*, and the earth *gold*, and then shuffling the contents of one hand into the other, he would keep up the process until he lost all sense of the difference between the gold and the earth. His ideal of service is absolute unworldliness and freedom from the desire of gain. He loves and serves Râma because Râma is the best and most loving master. The service of the true saint is the service of the purest affection and most unselfish loyalty. Some of the songs he sings expressive of this touching devotedness are exceedingly pathetic, and show how very negligent we often are.

Nor is his reverence confined within Hin-

duism. For long days he subjected himself to various disciplines to realize the Mahomedan idea of an all-powerful Allah. He let his beard grow, he fed himself on Moslem diet, he continually repeated sentences from the Koran. His reverence for Christ is deep and genuine. He bows his head at the name of Jesus, honors the doctrine of his sonship, and we believe he once or twice attended Christian places of worship. These ideas at all events show the catholic religious culture of this great Hindu saint.

Each form of worship that we have tried to indicate above is to the Paramhamsa a living and most enthusiastic principle of personal religion, and the accounts of discipline and exercise through which he has arrived at his present state of devotional eclectism are most wonderful, although they cannot be published. He never writes anything, seldom argues, he never attempts

to instruct, he is continually pouring out his soul in a rhapsody of spiritual utterances, he sings wonderfully, and makes observations of singular wisdom. He unconsciously throws a flood of marvelous light upon the obscurest passages of the Puranic Shastras, and brings out the fundamental principles of the popular Hindu faith with a philosophical clearness which strangely contrasts itself with his simple and illiterate life. These incarnations, he says, are but the forces (*Shakti*) and dispensations (*Lila*) of the eternally wise and blessed *Akhanda Sachchidânanda* who never can be changed or formulated, who is one endless and everlasting ocean of light, truth and joy.

If all his utterances could be recorded they would form a volume of strange and wonderful wisdom. If all his observations on men and things could be reproduced, people might think that the days of proph-

ecy, of primeval, unlearned wisdom had returned. But it is most difficult to render his sayings in English.*

A living evidence of the depth and sweetness of Hindu religion is this good and holy man. He has wholly controlled his flesh. It is full of soul, full of the reality of religion, full of joy, full of blessed purity. As a *Siddha* Hindu ascetic he is a witness of the falsehood and emptiness of the world. His witness appeals to the profoundest heart of every Hindu. He has no other thought, no other occupation, no other relation, no other friend in his humble life than his God. That God is more than sufficient for him. His spotless holiness, his deep unspeakable blessedness, his unstudied, endless wisdom, his childlike peacefulness and affection towards all men, his

* Prof. Max Muller has recently given a number of these sayings to the world in a volume entitled "Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings."



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consuming, all-absorbing love for God are his only reward. And may he long continue to enjoy that reward! Our own ideal of religious life is different, but so long as he is spared to us, gladly shall we sit at his feet to learn from him the sublime precepts of purity, unworldliness, spirituality and inebriation in the love of God.

# BOOKS ON THE

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